

Environmental Policy Commission Minutes

April 21, 2014

City Hall, Room 2000

EPC Members in Attendance

✓	Scott Barstow	✓	Jim Kapsis		
X	Sam Gaugush	✓	Tyler Orton		
✓	Susan Gitlin	✓	Monica Starnes		
X	Geoffrey Goode	✓	Ryan Wojtanowski		
✓	Patrick Holman				

City Staff

Khoa Tran, Robert Taylor, Bill Eger

Begin 7:30 PM

Welcome and Introductions

Public Comments

- None

Minutes Approval

- The EPC approved the minutes (with edits) for the following meetings: February 24, 2014 and April 7, 2014

RPCA Natural Resources Division Program, Dr. Robert Taylor, Division Chief, RPCA Natural Resources Division

- Dr. Taylor provided a general overview of his program, along with specific issues currently faced by the City.
- Urban forestry pertains to the care and maintenance of “street trees” and presents some significant challenges. The Urban Forestry Master Plan was developed in 2009, containing 53 recommendations. It possessed many good ideas, but lacked a solid implementation plan as not all of the recommendations were within the control of the division (e.g., funding dependent). In the near term, budget constraints (~10% cuts in FY 2015) require the program to reassess the recommendations and determine what is realistic.
- The City is developing its first natural land management plan to identify existing natural resource assets across five regions. The program is working with the open space planning process, where there is significant overlap. They are also working with the City’s GIS office to convert boundary information for the purpose of identifying easements or just cooperation. This includes utilizing a previously created geologic atlas and digitizing it along with GIS.

- The City is also focused on invasive plant management, engaging staff, volunteers and sometimes consultants to control invasive plants at public sites across the City (e.g., some stream corridors, parks, etc)
- Dr. Taylor spoke about the flexibility the program has in reallocating budgetary resources from personnel (when vacancies occur) to maintenance or other expenses, as needed. The maintenance requirements are significant – for example, the Urban Forestry Master plan calls for tree maintenance every 5 years; currently, the budget supports a 12-14 year cycle.
- Dr. Taylor described the coordination with utilities when tree maintenance is required, including the utilization of risk assessments. In prior years, the wrong trees have been planted under power lines, creating issues.
- The program is also developing an environmental and sustainability management system (ESMS), sponsored by Virginia Tech (similar to ISO 14001). The program is interested in a systems approach that would include sustainability in all projects as a matter of due course. The ESMS is good for looking broadly at activities with an environmental impact. Discussion pointed out that a systems approach is useful in operations, but much more complex when the product is environmental.
- Dr. Taylor discussed the creation of the City's new performance and accountability office that is central to budget development, utilizing a number of functional focus areas, department work plans and zero based budgeting. This includes setting some targets for the natural resource department.
- EPC engaged Dr. Taylor on the selection of plants and trees in the City, who responded that multiple stakeholders that may or may not consult with the City's experts make decisions on trees. Initial designs are typically the result of landscape architects. It appears that the natural resources department is not being consulted at the earliest stages, but cooperation has been increasing. There are not reliable best practices to be followed and the EcoCity Action Plan is utilized to a limited degree.

Commission Members and Staff Update

- The Waterfront Commission will meet on May 29 from 5-6pm to discuss the possibility of a pedestrian mall on the lower block of King St.
- On May 8, there will be a presentation on the waterfront landscaping plan at the Lee Center at 6:30pm.
- The Fort Ward Advisory Committee will meet to discuss storm water plan on May 7.
- Tyler Orton expressed interest in serving on the Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan group; Khoa Tran volunteered to inquire as to whether it was possible for EPC member representation
- EPC's position regarding fracking in the George Washington National Forest was discussed, with general interest in submitting a letter in opposition to the activity. Sam Gaugush has recused himself from this issue.

Alexandria Earth Day Logistics & Planning

- Responses to the on-line quiz have been slow. EPC members discussed ways of taking the quiz at the EPC tent, determining that pencil and paper was the best path forward, given the technological limitations of the park. Prizes for participants/winners will be procured by the EPC. EPC members went over the schedule for the day to ensure adequate coverage.

Adjourn 9:05pm